

Deuteronomy 31-34

The Last Acts of Moses and his Death

I. Moses' parting words and the presentation of Joshua (31:1-8)

- ◆ It is only because *God* is with us that we can be strong and courageous (Robertson)

II. The seventh-year covenant renewal ceremony (31:9-13)

- ◆ Moses is pictured here as handing over the *Law of God* in written form to the priests so that *Yahweh's* revelation might be preserved for posterity
 - The reading of this law before all Israel every 7 years at the Feast of Tabernacles was a special occasion to remind Israel of her obligations.

III. The divine charge to Moses and Joshua (31:14-23)

- ◆ The commissioning of Joshua
- ◆ Introduction to the Song of Moses

IV. The law deposited beside the ark (31:24-29)

- ◆ It might seem fruitless to call people to covenant allegiance knowing full well, as Moses did, that it would all come to naught. What is important to note, however, is that Israel's leaders did have full freedom to choose obedience and blessing. Any failure would be theirs and any punishment justly meted out, for they had formally and publicly pledged themselves to whatever outcome might result. (Merrell)

V. The Song of Moses (31:30-32:47)

- ◆ "Hymns are a most effective tool for memorizing scripture and biblical doctrines. The inspired hymnbook, the Psalter, contains at least one poetic expression of every experience in the Christian Life. We should learn to sing through the Psalter; otherwise we can give the impression that the Church only sings happy, triumphant hymns and the spiritually depressed or bereaved Christian can think that he or she does not belong."
 1. Introduction to the song (31:30)
 2. Invocation of witnesses (32:1-4)
 - Song in the form of a *rib*/lawsuit
 - The whole creation bears witness to the covenant between *God* and Israel
 3. Indictment of the people (32:5-6)

- "warped", "twisted", "perverted"... a grotesque mockery of what God created them to be
- 4. Review of past blessings (32:7-14)
 - While every aspect of creation is under God's providential control, His people are the objects of His particularly kind care (Robertson). Apple of His eye.
- 5. Israel's Rebellion (32:15-18)
 - It was all the more urgent that this recital of past failure be recalled regularly in the singing of the song so that the hard lessons of judgment that followed sin might act as a deterrent to future disobedience (Merrill).
- 6. God's promise of judgment (32:19-25)
 - Judgment appropriated to covenant disloyalty (Merrill)
- 7. The powerlessness of other gods (32:26-38)
 - The Lord's judgment of Israel was limited for two reasons: His compassion and the misapprehension of Israel's enemies.
- 8. The vindication of the Lord (32:39-43)
 - The song concludes with the judgment of the wicked
 - "The meaning here is that of reconciliation. God's wayward people, set for judgment and unable to find deliverance through powerless pagan gods, would at last be purged of their sin, vindicated in the face of their enemies, and restored to perfect covenant relationship with the Lord" (Merrill)
- 9. Conclusion of the song (32:44)

VI. Interlude (32:45-52)

1. Moses' exhortation to obedience (32:45-47)
2. Instructions surrounding Moses' death (32:48-52)
 - ♦ Mt. Nebo - highest peak (elevation 2,600 ft.) was Pisgah, about 20 miles from Jericho, and affords an unobstructed view of nearly all the Promise Land

VII. The blessing of the tribes by Moses

- ♦ "They express what he fervently desired for his people and what he confidently expected that God would do." (Merrill)
- 1. Historical review (33:2-5)
- 2. Blessing on Reuben (33:6)
- 3. Blessing of Judah (33:7)
- 4. Blessing on Levi (33:8-11)
- 5. Blessing on Benjamin (33:12)

6. Blessing on Joseph (33:13-17)
7. Blessing on Zebulun and Issachar (33:18-19)
 - ◆ Their close juxtaposition prompted Moses to pronounce a common blessing on them
8. Blessing on Gad (33:20-21)
9. Blessing on Dan (33:22)
10. Blessing on Naphtali (33:23)
 - ◆ By far the most abundant blessing was that the Messiah spent most of His life and ministry there.
11. Blessing on Asher (33:24-25)
 - ◆ Moses spoke of this tribe as blessed above all others, one especially favored by his brother tribes.
 - ◆ Moses' blessing reached its climax in his blessing of the nation collectively (33:26-29)

VIII. The death of Moses (34:1-12)

- ◆ Moses looks out over the Promised Land (33:1-4), up to God in prayer for his successor (34:9), and back over all the miraculous works God has done to bring the people this far (34:10-12) (Raymond Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy*)
- ◆ Moses not kept from Promised Land forever (Luke 9:28-31)